West Asheville Oral History

Mr. O.E. Starnes
July 9, 1991

Interviewers:
Rob Neufeld & Sally vander Straeten

WEST ASHEVILLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Interview with O.E. Starnes, Jr. by Rob Neufeld and Sally vander Straeten, July 9, 1991, at Mr. Starnes legal office, Market Street, Asheville

[note: Technical problems through first side of tape aaccount for occasional gaps in transcript. Missing is section on outings and games with fellow boys.]

RN: Your father was O.E. Starnes, Sr. That's not so difficult to figure out.

OES: Right. He never used the "Senior."

...

OES: I was born May 3, 1924. My father was not actually born in Asheville. He was born out just a little further to the west in the Deaverview section somewhere. His mother was Elizabeth Elunida (?) Bell .... She died in the upper fifties, but my grandfather, John Pink Starnes, died before I knew him. They were both born and raised in Buncombe County. My mother was Marion Fletcher. She was the daughter of W.E. Fletcher. Her mother was Minnie Gaston of the Candler Gastons. Likewise, my my matrnal grandmother was born in Buncombe County. My grandfather, W.E. Fletcher--Uncle Bill he was called--was born in Fletcher. Somehow or another, he and my grandmother got together. He lived all of his adult life, after they were married, at any rate [in Buncombe County]. They had eight children. In fact, mother and father were both one of eight. He [Uncle Bill] lived in the Candler section. He was a farmer. My grandfather Pink--J.P. Starnes--was in the insurance business all of his working life. He and several other men here in Asheville sometime near the turn of the century started a company called Imperial Life Insurance Company. And he worked at that all of his life. My father worked at it all of his life. He was executive vice-president, and president during the latter years of his life.

Many of the Starnes did work for Imperial Life Insurance Company. It was organized here in Asheville and it was an in-state company, and sold out in 1957 to a national company. My brother, Hal F. Starnes, who still lives here--he's a little younger than I--worked for Imperial for a number of years and then he went to work for Wachovia. Some of the principals in the old Imperial Life, in addition to my grandfather, were a fellow named Gay Green, who owned a lot of property and apparently one of Asheville's earliest very active and prosperous business property owners, and several others.

RN: What effect has the Imperial Life Insurance Company had on West Asheville and the west Buncombe communties or areas? What are the intersections there?

OES: That's hard to say. I was never a part of the company. And it sold out in 1957. Certainly it was one of the most active

operations of that type in western North Carolina. It started out selling industrial policies, which meant they had agents out on what they called debits, and the premiums on a weekly might have been ten cents or twenty cents. That might correspond to a five-dollar bill now. The idea of some of them, I'm sure, was burial expense and whatever small type insurance coverage that they had. Certainly, they also had regular full-line life insurance policies. I know I had one, so I know they had them in addition to the industrial policies. That was the need that my grandfather and Mr. Green and Mr. Eck (?) and those who started the company met....

RN: Did the company provide policies for industries in the western part of the county, and has that given you insight into some of these industries?

OES: I don't think they got into casualty insurance or fire insurance or if they would insure the executives of a company. They were not that sophisticated an operation. The main thing that they did, and I've heard my father speak of it many times, was lending money to towns back in the Depression. A lot of little towns were in really desperate financial shape, and Imperial was right here in the seat of the area, knowing the people, knowing the local problems. For example, my father was dealing with the mayor of Robbinsville, and loaned the town money, and kept the town going for some period of time. Another company, not knowing the area, not knowing the people [would not have loaned the money. But the Old Imperial Life Insurance Company did] and never lost a dime.

RN: Was it customary for insurance companies to also be loan agencies?

OES: [The insurance companies]...bought the deed of trust back from whomever was borrowing the money, and they were one of the principal lending companies here. Some of the Federal Savings & Loans were getting started, but back in earlier times, the banks were not in the mortgage loan business. But Imperial Life was deep into it. That was one of the ways they were able to take their premium dollars and earn money on it, and keep going and pay their help and pay their shareholders...

[gap in tape recording]

OES: ...all that land on the south side of the expressway, that used to be where we would go as children and seine for crawfish and perch, whatever.

RN: Were those catches used for meals?

OES: Oh no, they weren't that big. The creek wasn't that big.

RN: Just fun.

OES: Just purely for fun. We'd throw them back in. And crawfish--we would ooh and ah over the crawfish. You know, they're ugly boogers. It would be primarily for fun. I've never been snake bit, never been turtle bit; probably should have been down through there, but never have.

RN: How much has the landscape changed?

OES: My old home place at 100 Blue Ridge Avenue has changed practicallly not at all. When we moved there, I guess I was a year and a half old--my father bought four lots and built four houses....He could build our house a whole lot cheaper if he had three other houses going at the same time, which he would then sell or rent out, because the crew was right on the spot, and the floor plans, I'm sure, are quite similar, maybe identical, I don't know....I remember when he had a hundred dollars a month coming in for which he didn't have to work...

RN: Who eventually moved into those homes?

OES: We had 100. A man by the name of Mr. Mossman and his wife, and he worked for Imperial as did his daughter....

[gap in tape]

RN: Did your father choose your neighbors? Did you form a little community there?

OES: No, I wouldn't think so. They just happened to be the people who were looking for a place to live in. Whether they bought it or whether my father owner-financed the deal, I don't know. It never occurred to me at the time that there was any significance to that, and I still don't know, but that was just one way he started to generate a little income, and build for himself and his family. We got in pretty close contact with Mossman and Trantham particularly, seemed like, because Trantham went to the same church we did and the Mossmans worked for Imperial. Beaucooks (?), I think he worked for a candy company or something.

SVS: When you moved to Malvern Hills...

OES: '36.

SVS: Could you tell us a little bit about how Malvern Hills got started?

OES: When we moved there in '36, there were probably about seven or eight houses in all of Malvern Hills. Malvern Hills was a very ambitious development of J. Newton Anderson, who was the

headmaster of Asheville School for Boys, and it meant for boys back during all those years. He ran the school and he had the idea of this real estate development. It was way ahead of its time. All of the facilities would be underground--all the infrastructure--telephone lines, electric lines, everything that could be underground. Nobody heard of TV at that time, but everything was underground. Then when the Depression hit in '29, '30, '31, a few houses had been built, my father's being one, although he didn't build it. A man by the name of McClain, who was a retired Canadian druggist, built the house that we were in, and it was, for its time, a very lavish home. It has a great big courtyard and masonry walls and Italian rockwork in the courtyard, a lot of plantings, big garden. Had a maid and a yardman along with this retired couple, just the two of them. He had a chain of drug stores in Canada, we were told. He came and built that house, no expense spared, apparently. But then when things turned down, he needed to get back to Canada, I suppose to look after his work up there, and my father was able to buy it for a very modest amount. Sofa, dishes--took their good silver, I suppose, but they left here quickly, they had to get away, so we just walked into it, and it was ten cuts above the house that we had on Blue Ridge Avenue, which was a fine house. My aunt lived into it until she died here just a month ago. But any rate, it was a very beautiful old home, and at that time, about ninety-five percent of all the lots out in that area had not been sold, and they had been foreclosed by Consolidated Realty, which means they were just sitting there. Consolidated couldn't move them. Nobody could move them because there was just no money. Of course, the war hadn't come along at that point. So my dad and three other fellows made a bid on all of the undeveloped lots out in Malvern Hills, including the little old golf course which was down at the bottom of the hill, which is where the Asheville School boys were able to play golf--as well as others who had a membership, I guess. So they bought the golf course. That's one of my early recollections. And my mother's youngest brother, Bill, ran the golf course. They also bought some property out on Sand Hill Road....

[gap in tape]

The restrictions that were originally put in were a little too rigid. So what you've got is sort of a peculiarity. You've got eight or ten homes that really are quite nice and you've got a lot of homes that are very good but are not up to the original standards that Newt Anderson had when he established the place back during the boon days. So, you've got a really fine working man's neighborhood, and people really keep the place up.

All during my young years there, Malvern Hills was sort of a showplace around Christmastime because they all took great pride in developing their yards. The building that Ed Roberts had just down the street was always one you went to. [People came from all over to see the displays that the Malvern Hills houses

had.]...Some were pretty tacky, I'm sure, some were pretty garish, but some were quite well done. I remember, one year we won the prize for the best wreath in the window. I had a great, huge wreath, and I don't know what all we had on it, except we had lighted it from the flood light in the yard. This could have been--I built on the back end of my father's place in '52, and we lived there until '67....

RN: Do they still decorate with lights like that in Malvern Hills?

OES: Not as much, I don't know exactly why. I'm sure they still do some.

RN: So, gradually it began to fade away?

OES: I guess. I guess the newness ran off. You see, the houses were close together. The yards were fairly close together. If one did it, the neighbor didn't want to look drab. It became--I won't say it was one-upsmanship, but certainly there was some competition, and deliberately.

RN: Was the publicity word-of-mouth, or was it promoted in the papers?

OES: Word-of-mouth--oh, there might have been something in the papers. It just developed over a few years that people just knew that that was a place to go. You know, there's some little old town in North Carolina down near Charlotte.

SVS: That's right, you go through there every year.

OES: They go wild down there. I've never been through there. Malvern Hills was enough for me. It was really quite a heavy piece of the Christmas entertainment.

RN: I like what they do in Spain. They decorate the outside of their walls in the courtyards with flowerpots, and they sort of compete and create a gorgeous effect.

You said Newt Anderson was the headmaster. How would a headmaster also be in a position to be a real estate developer?

OES: He was the brains behind it. You see, it was in the area of the school. He didn't own the property as far as I know. But he must have had access to some funds--maybe some parents of students. I don't know about that except I know that they put in modern asphalt and nice wide paved streets...sidewalks all up and down each street. You don't see that in Biltmore Forest. You don't see that in Grove Park. It was supposedly a real showplace, but the timing just shot it down.

RN: Was he building for families of the students?

OES: Well, Harvey Firestone's son had a place. It was not far from where my father's place was. At the time we moved in there, Jamie Clarke's father was living in the place. That's when I first began to--Jamie's a little older than I--I began to get acquainted with him a little bit because he and his father built there. They were very active in this part of the world. They were northern Presbyterians, and they came down here with the purpose of opening up this area, and it was something called "God's Little Acre," which was a part of Reverend Dumont Clarke[']s estate]. He had a son, Monty--I reckon he's Junior--he's still around here. Jamie and Dumont Clarke would tell you all about that. I guess that's just on the east side of the river rather than the west side. But, anyway, you talk about parents that lived there. That's the only one that I know about. The Firestones came down and built a place. So did their son. They'd have a weekend retreat, I suppose, and I guess they had a governess or housekeeper or maybe a member of the family. That's the house my brother lives in now, which he renovated. It was built fine for the time, but it wasn't much for 1987, or whenever my brother went back into it.

RN: So it would be wrong to characterize Malvern Hills initially as a place for families of Asheville School boys.

OES: That wouldn't work.

RN: It was a high quality residential community that was trying to draw people into a booming area.

OES: Well, Mr. Bryson, who was a mayor of Asheville--Holmes Bryson--lived just down the street from us. A fellow named Guy Sayles(?), who worked with Farmer's Federation, which was an outgrowth of some of this northern Presbyterian cooperative business trying to help the local farmers--he was our next door neighbor. A fellow named Walter Damtoft, who was in the top echelon at Champion Paper, was the next house out. And that's all there was on Bear Creek Road. Our backyard, when we got there, mother nursed it when she got there, was a rock garden, which was the site of the old Bear Creek Road which went from western North Carolina over into Tennessee where they talked about driving the hogs and the geese and the othr livestock to market....

[gap in tape]

...she [O.E., Jr.'s mother] came back [from Cuba] and was teaching at Sand Hill. At that time, my father was in the eastern part of the state, opening up the eastern part of the State for Imperial Life, and then came back. They had known each other, but nothing had happened. Then he came back and they got together and they had my brother and myself.

RN: How did they find each other?

OES: I don't know. I think they met at a dance or something. They were married in 1923 and I was born in the Spring of the next year....

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

RN: You had a tennis court in your yard. Did people gather there for games?

OES: Not really. There weren't that many people who played tennis. My brother and I just learned it from scratch. We never had any lessons. Mother got enamored with it because in Cuba that's apparently the way some of the gentlepeople passed their time--in long dresses. She had some pictures, and all that, most of them in Cuba. And she knew some fellows from Scotland, and so it was, you know, for a little gal out in the western part of the state in Candler going to Cuba and mixing with Scotsmen who were there teaching as she was. Apparently, they were teaching the sugar growers' children. I don't know what they were teaching, but it was a very rewarding experience for her, and so she came back, and she decided she wanted her boys to have access to playing a little tennis. So by hook and by crook and with some local labor doing it who never built a tennis court before in their lives, and who probably never played tennis, they're trying to level out the ground and build a tennis court. And we had a nice tennis court, and we played for years. After the war, it was never quite the same. My brother and I were spread out, getting married, and I was in law school and all that.

RN: As a twelve year old, were you spending much time in Malvern Hills, or were you making it down to the park or meadow a lot?

OES: I don't think the park was formed quite yet. It used to be called Horney Heights Park. A gentleman by the name of Horney developed some of that area. At some point, it became Malvern Hills, and they were the first public tennis courts that I'm aware of west of the river. Then we neglected our own court at home. We'd rather go down there because there was always a bunch of kids down there. And then we could go jump in the swimming pool. I don't know when that was built. It must have been '39 or '40 or '41. I remember going to it while I was still in school here in Asheville before I went away to the army. I went away to college. That was part of the deal down there. We'd have tournaments and do a lot of swimming, trying to ogle the girls and all that business down at the tennis court or the swimming pool. Then, in '41, I graduated from high school, Lee Edwards. I went to Vance, to Hall Fletcher, and then to Lee Edwards as it was called then, now Asheville High. I graduated in 1941.

Well, the first school I went to was Saint Joan of Arc, which was right at the head of Blue Ridge Avenue. Vance was another five or six hundred yards, but I would have had to cross Haywood Road, and my father was afraid. If we would just walk to the head of the road and go to school, we wouldn't have to cross Haywood Road. That was my first experience at school, under the nuns at Saint Joan of Arc. I went there through the third grade. The old building that I went to is long since down. But I have very fond memories of the nuns and our standing up and reciting the multiplication table and the pledge of allegiance. Of course, I was a Presbyterian, and the school was strongly Catholic, and we had to go to Mass once a day or once a week or ten times a day, I don't know. I know we had to go to Mass, and at some point that worried my folks, and I got old enough to cross the road so then I went [to Vance] in the middle of my third year. That's when they had "A" and "B." You progressed to A and B, and if you didn't pass A, why, you repeated A at some point. At any rate, they moved me up a half grade because I just had a little more exposure in Catholic School with smaller classes or whatever than we did in the public schools. They tested me and moved me up a half year, which boogered me all the way through high school because I could have finished up in January or December. But at that time, I was active in school politics, I was student body president, and so I wanted to stay on and finish the term to which I'd been elected. So I just made do my last semester, and a lot of folks did that.

RN: What was the opinion about you and your brother crossing over from Presbyterian to Catholic? Were those two separate communities? Was there a lot of interaction or were people not conscious of where one went to church and went to school?

OES: Oh, yes. For example, my father's cousin, my cousin once removed, a fellow named Nane (?) Starnes, was a Baptist minister. Some of the Starneses were Methodists. Some of the earliest Starneses were circuit riders, they call them, in the Methodist Church. My uncle Alfred Starnes was a circuit rider. I remember him. We used to have reunions out at his place out in Starnes Cove. That's where the first Starneses came from--came to from down in what was then called Burke, but Burke covered a great wad of country down there. We're told that the first Starneses came up there and settled in the Starnes Cove section. Then there was sort of a clique of them, I suppose, that grew out there. Then they married and intermarried. And that became Starnes Cove. I'm tempted to go out there and buy a little piece of land, just so I can claim it. I wouldn't know those folks. They wouldn't care about me at all. But just to have a piece of land in Starnes Cove. I might even call that my residence even though I might live somewhere else.

You asked me about church. Certainly, my parents were both active and my grandparents were in a small Presbyterian country church. And they were deeply ingrained. As far as I know,

[Saint Joan of Arc] was the only Catholic Church in West Asheville. There were a number of people around who were Catholics. In fact, on our street, there was a house on the corner there that I think was sort of a nunnery or something. Maybe the priest lived there. That was holy ground. That was just a little different. You didn't see them out and around much. We might be playing under the street light at that intersection, kicking the can and skating and riding our scooters and whatever. But we'd never go on that property because that was Catholic property. At the end of the next block was where the school was. So it made perfect good sense to have them that close together. So we certainly were aware that that was a different group than we were. As far as any discrimination, I'm not faintly aware that there was any.

RN: I was wondering more about the associations that would come about naturally just because you happened to see somebody in church. For instance, your friends as a child, were they all Presbyterians?

OES: No.

RN: Even your family weren't all Presbyterians!

OES: No, that was sort of a peculiarity in that my immediate friends--well, there was one fellow at church who was about my age, and he and I played around quite a bit together. He would visit me and we would visit with him occasionally. But most of the kids that I played around with were around the school. The church was three or four miles from where we lived, and they went to a different school. That was Sand Hill School or Enka or whatever it was at the time. While I knew a few of those folks, I wouldn't see them during the week. Our church didn't have Sunday evening events where you would see those kids on a social basis. You'd just see them at church and at Sunday school, and that would be it, and you wouldn't see them at night. Although I knew some--in fact, I married a girl, my first wife who died some years ago, who went to Sand Hill. I knew her in later years through high school. But my friends were primarily from where I was going to school, Hall Fletcher or Vance and then at Lee Edwards, and the kids who went to Sand Hill, I would hardly ever see them except at church.

RN: Even within a school, things break down.

OES: When we went to Lee Edwards, there was some little feeling about West Asheville. It was a different area. It was not Grove Park. Even though a lot of areas in West Asheville were better maintained than some places in Asheville, still, it was a working man's area essentially--before the days when people retired here, and they settle everywhere now. It was sometimes called "Worst Asheville" just as a matter of teasing as much as anything else.

RN: What did West Asheville kids get back at Asheville with?

OES: Oh, you'd call them river rats or something like that. Of course, there were some pretty tough areas down along the east side of the river toward Woodfin and all down through there. And so we'd call them river rats or something. Really, it was no big deal. I suppose the West Asheville people tended to stick together even though we might not be socializing. I knew who I had gone to Hall Fletcher with. It was a smaller school in the first place. When I was up for election in the student body elections, I suspect the fact that there'd be a couple of people from Asheville running, and I'd get a certain number of votes from each of their groups, and that the West Asheville crowd would stick together pretty well, I suspect I might not have won an office or two if it hadn't been for the West Asheville "We'll show those boogers" [attitude], even though it was not spoken about. It was no point of great concern, but there might have been something to that.

RN: Do you think that there's something unique about West Asheville and its people, that there might be some values or something about the community itself that are different from other communities and from Asheville?

OES: Well, unless you can categorize it on [the basis of] economic strata--and of course Malvern Hills is one of the nicer sections in West Asheville. Down State Street, down some areas in there, Michigan Avenue, Alabama, there are some areas in which there are very small houses and working folks. Asheville had them too, but for some reason, there was some basic concept that "that's where the working folk lived." By working folks, you mean, paid by the hour. Not that everybody that I went to school with at Lee Edwards lived in Grove Park or lived up on Kimberly Avenue. Very few did. But I suppose there's just sort of an aura. There are great areas, however, around Hall Fletcher for example, where there were three bedroom, one bath frame houses worth five or six thousand dollars back in those days, whereas over here [in Asheville], houses that now bring in 250 would probably have brought in 25. Everything is relative, but if it's not that, I don't know what it is.

SVS: How about race relations? Was there a black community you could remember?

OE: Oh yes.

SVS: How did that work with the rest of the community?

OE: Well, it was of no great concern. It didn't give me pause that there were no blacks at Vance School or no blacks at Saint Joan of Arc. I remember a boy when I was in the second grade, he

still lives here, and he came from Chesapeake Bay. Oh man, I thought that was another world! If you asked him where he lived --he lived Chesapeake Bay. Well, I don't know where he lived, but he said, "Chesapeake Bay." At any rate, I knew that there were certain black sections, Burton Street, down through there, right in the heart of West Asheville. They had their own school. And of course we had a maid--several. It gave me no pause. That's about all I can tell you.

RN: There really wasn't that much interaction?

OES: No. There really was very little interaction, I guess. They didn't play each other in sports. As you well know, Stephens Lee had its separate goings-on, and Asheville High did. It was sort of a heavy scene when they were put together, but apparently it's reasonably well smoothed out.

RN: Iola Byers was telling us that her her father, E.W. Pearson, was a significant real estate person in the West Asheville community, in the Burton Street area particularly, and was able to exchange opinions, make deals with the white folks of the West Asheville and Asheville communities on a rather equal basis. I wonder if there were times when, even though the black and white communities were separate, the interaction on a business level or political level was easier than it was in the fifties or sixties.

OES: I'm really not able to give you any particular insight on that. My connection in the black community was darn near non-existent. When we moved into Malvern Hills and the house was too big for my mother--we had help occasioanlly when we lived on Blue Ridge Avenue, but we needed full-time help up there. So he went to Reverend Dixon, who was a minister here on Clingman Avenue, right at the corner of Clingman and Hilliard. He had loaned him money, I guess, maybe loaned his church money. He knew him as one of the leaders of the black community. He called him Reverend Dixon. "Now, Reverend Dixon, I've got two boys out there and I've got a wife and we've got this house, and we thought we could use a little help, and so can you think of anybody." He had some connections down in Inman, South Carolina. And a black woman appeared a week or two later. She wanted to go to work. She wanted to get out of the cotton field or whatever she did down there, and she stayed with our family and still is in the family, really. She lives down on South French Broad. Well, anyway, to say that's my connection with the colored community is pretty shallow. My son could talk with you about the interaction at Lee Edwards because by the time he came along, it was being integrated.

I knew that there was a Stevens Lee. I knew that they played ball. I knew that they had been in the parade with their band, and that that was always one of the highlights of the parade because they were jivin' and jumpin' and carrying on at a great rate. I'd run a hundred yards just to see their act. But

insofar as interaction--it may just be the fact that I lived in Malvern Hills or West Asheville as opposed to living over here that might have contributed to that. I don't know. I did not know any black people my age as I came along. That's just the way it was here as far as I can tell.

RN: I'm interested in jumping back, if we may, to the stories of the help that your father and his partners gave to various churches and communities during the Depression. You mentioned the Robbinsville story. Are there a couple of other examples of...

OES: Well, Valdese, North Carolina--I remember my dad always thought well of the Waldensians because everything else went to pot, but they paid their debts. He relied on that. He knew they would. They were conservative, stoic folks. I don't know whether he loaned them five thousand dollars or a hundred and fifty thousand, but whatever it was, he always spoke well of them because they always paid. And I don't think he ever had to foreclose on a church. All I've got is second-hand information on that, from casual comments that dad would make from time to time.

RN: Is there a writer in your family--a diarist? Might there be some accounts or photographs that might contribute to this history?

OES: There have been two or three of the Starneses who have tried to write these things up. I don't know how accurate they are. I remember a time or two, my dad threw one down and said, "Well, they missed it here." If you missed it one place, as far as he's concerned, everything else is unreliable. I know there was a lady named McClain who was a Starnes, W.P. Starnes' daughter, Katherine. She doesn't live here now, but she wrote up a history. There was another history written up. I think I may have a copy of that stuff at home. Maybe my brother does.

SVS: Did your mother ever write anything? Did she write any letters from Cuba or anything like that?

OES: I don't have them if she did. Of course, it wouldn't have been to my dad. It would have been to her parents. But I'm sure she did because she was a great writer. But I don't think they were preserved. That was sort of an aberration, really. It didn't have much to do with our local history.

SVS: Yes, but I think the Asheville Normal School--doesn't Warren Wilson encompass it?

OES: Yes. The Normal was really a very beneficial element in our community here because I'm sure mother would never have been able to go beyond high school had it not been for the Normal,

which charged very little. They had enough to do that, but certainly it was a very conservative, quiet operation over there. My mother and my aunt, they kept up all around through the years, they'd have reunions occasionally, I think. It was a very effective organ here in our whole area. Mother would always appreciate it. That was the extent of her education. She never went back to school. She started raising children at that point.

RN: What were the dreams of your mother and father? Did they have dreams for themselves, for the community, for their children?

OES: You know, things were pretty prosaic in our crowd. We had breakfast at eight o'clock, or seven-thirty when we were in school. We had pancakes on Wednesday and pancakes on Sunday. The rest of the time we either had cereal or eggs. You could set your clock by that. And we had dinner at six, and you dang well better be there at six. I mean, that was just part of the deal. Of course, there was a good reason for that. When Connie first was there, she lived on the place; later, when she moved to town, we didn't want to be too infringing on her time so she could catch the seven-thirty bus and go home.

Things were pretty busy. We understood that. At the same time, mother and dad were, I think, pretty lenient with us. I started driving a car the minute I turned sixteen, I guess. They didn't have driver's ed back then. As far as their dreams--well, I'm sure they wanted the best for my brother and myself. Of course, the war came along and tore up everything for a spell. I originally--you talk about a dream--well, this would qualify. My father said, "Well, what do you want to do when you grow up?"

One thing, I had a dream. My brother and I were about eight or nine years old. My father smoked cigarettes. And occasionally, out taking a walk, he'd just have a chew. I never saw a spitoon in the house, but I understand he had one at the office. Mother wouldn't let him have one in the house. But he enjoyed smoking. And he developed a cough and he said, "Well, I don't inhale cigar," so he smoked cigars for the rest of his life, and he died at 87. At any rate, he said, "If you boys won't smoke"--and him putting a cigarette aside to tell us that--"until you're twenty-one, why, we'll buy you an automobile." He didn't say it might be the cheapest Ford available. Well, that was no problem. I hadn't intended to smoke anyhow. It was of no attraction. And a couple of years later, why, we were talking about it again, somehow alcohol came into it at that point. And they never did say, "If I ever catch you smoking or if I ever catch you drinking a beer, you are in big trouble." None of that. It was a quid pro quo kind of an arrangement. No problem.

I turned twenty-one, I was overseas. But when I came back, I reminded him. Of course, I got a beer allotment, I got a cigarette allotment over there, so I traded them off for a candy bar or whatever else. They had no charm for me at all. Two reasons: number one, in the back of my head, I knew about the

car; and secondly, my mother was extremely teatotal. My dad enjoyed a drink and he enjoyed a smoke. But he was very circumspect as far as the drinking was concerned. But it tore mother up. She was very straight-laced about it. Anyway, that was part of the background in conservative Presbyterianism. I'm sure I was sort of an anomaly with these boys from Detroit or whatever. And every time the beer bottle came out, they'd make a beeline to my bunk, they'd want to trade me for it. I gave it to them I suppose, made some trade.

At any rate, he [dad] said, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "I'm afraid I don't have any big ideas." He said, "Well, if you don't have any ideas, let's make one. You become a doctor." Fine. That was okay with me. I had no better ideas. Because, you understand, dad went to farm school, which was another Presbyterian outpost, and i think he only went through--and it may well be they didn't have full grades, I don't know--he went through about the ninth grade. That's the extent of his education. So having a professional man in the family, I'm sure he thought it was very desirable. And a doctor, or a lawyer, I suppose, those are the professions. We've got architects and accountants--we've got a jillion of them--teachers, whatever. But any rate, that was the deal. Then after my second year at Davidson College, I started hitting all of the organic chemistry and quantitative and qualitative analysis [courses] and those really had no charm for me, seemed like. I was more into the verbal arts. At that time, no problem, I had to go to the army; I went off for three years. Who cares what you plan to do up til that point?

And then I came back. My father and I picked up the conversation. My mother was involved. I was really not interested in going on in the science of medicine. "Let's talk about something else," [I said], so we talked about law, and that seemed to hit pretty good, so after I had finished up two years at Davidson in 1947--I came back in the Spring of '46, went all that summer, all the following year and the next summer, and made up two years in that short span--I went immediately in the Fall of '47 into law school at Chapel Hill. I came out a lawyer, and things have fallen into place since then. So I guess those were his aspirations. My brother, of course a little younger, the war hit him a little younger, he went off to South Carolina and came out a naval officer in the Naval ROTC I guess they called it. By the time he got out of school--I think he had maybe a year at Mars Hill--it was just a question of staying home, not going too far. Gas ration, everything, was a big problem. So he had a year there and the Navy sent him off to South Carolina University...

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2; AND END OF TAPING SESSION.